

CT DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

FARMLAND PRESERVATION ADVISORY BOARD

DRAFT Minutes of Meeting

June 7, 2012, 10:03am

CT-DOAg Lebanon Agricultural Reserve (LAR), Lebanon, CT

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman George Hindinger, Commissioner Steven K. Reviczky, Joseph Bonelli, Paul Larson, Robin Chesmer, Henry Talmage, James Zeoli, Lucy Nolan, and Ben Freund.

ALSO PRESENT: For the Department – Director Joseph J. Dippel, Katherine Winslow, and Denise O’Meara; Others – Denise Hindinger, and Kim Abell.

I. Call to Order: Lebanon Agricultural Reserve (LAR) (575 ac) – Roger Foote Road and Norwich Avenue, Lebanon.

Chairman Hindinger called the meeting to order at 10:03 am. The minutes of the March 5, 2012 meeting of the Farmland Preservation Advisory Board (Board) were distributed and approved (Zeoli motioned- Bonelli seconded- Unanimous).

Director Dippel introduced Kim Abell, M & K Dairy, currently leasing the LAR. Dippel discussed the history of the farm, which lead to the State purchase of the farm. Dippel discussed farm activities performed by M& K Dairy, the rehabilitation project of the dwelling, the farmland restoration project, restoring 20± acres for productive farmland, and transfer of dairy equipment from former Southbury Training School Facility.

II. Beltane Dairy: (Paul Trubey and Mark Pearsall) – Roger Foote and Taylor Bridge Roads, Lebanon.

Kim Abell gave a tour of the Beltane Farm and goat cheese processing facility. Director Dippel stated that the Beltane Farm is projected to be a Community Farm Preservation Program Farm (22 +/-acres), a cooperative project with the DoAg, NRCS, CFT and Town of Lebanon. Dippel indicated that the farm supplies restaurants and farmer markets with goat cheeses, milk, and yogurts. Dippel added that the Beltane Farm is also an approved Farmland Restoration Program application, clearing about 6 acres for hay and pasture lands.

III. Greywall Farm (Robin and Lincoln Chesmer) – Chappell Hill Road, Lebanon PDR farm amongst 12 farms of a 1,550 +acre cluster of preserved farmlands in Lebanon.

Lincoln Chesmer gave a tour of Greywall Farm, one of the larger and more modern farms in terms of cow comfort and agricultural by product management. Chesmer discussed the history of the farm, and discussed the importance of State and Federal Assistance Programs.

IV. Business:

- 1. Budget and Legislative Update.** Commissioner Reviczky discussed CIA funding, which allowed for hiring of staff for the Farmland Preservation Program. Reviczky added that new programs including Community Farms and Farmland Restoration have created increased demands on staff. The agency is pursuing avenues to support these programs including personal service agreements.

2. FLP Program update summary.

A. Community Farms Preservation Program. Director Dippel passed out a summary map, highlighting the towns in the state which have completed and signed co-operative agreements between the municipalities and the State. Dippel stated that 21 co-operative agreements have been completed, with three agreements in the process of being finalized. Dippel indicated that 32 towns have contacted NRCS to determine locally important farmland soils. Dippel indicated that in order for the municipalities to be considered for the Program, each interested municipality must establish a local farmland preservation plan, develop a municipal funding mechanism to partner with the state, as well as contact NRCS to designate locally important farmland soils. Dippel stated that a municipality must first be approved by the State to be qualified, in order to be eligible to submit an application for consideration on a potential CFPP joint-purchase of a farm.

- 3. Farmland Restoration Program.** Director Dippel stated that there has been great interest in the Program, with 40 applications received to date, consisting of approximately 570 acres to be reclaimed. Dippel indicated that 28 applications have been processed, of approximately 470 acres to be reclaimed. Dippel indicated that the total acres owned by applicants are 3,850 acres, with an average farm size of 107 acres. The average size of the area to be reclaimed is 14 acres per applicant, resulting in an increase of approximately 13.4% of reclaimed area per farm. Dippel added that of the five million program allocation, 3.5 million is available. Applications are taken on an on-going process.

V. Adjournment:

Hindinger asked members of the Board, if the next Board meeting should be held at the Department of Agriculture, Hartford, or if there was interest in meeting at another farm. Discussion indicated that a farm visit would be their preference.

Next meeting, Monday, September 10th, or 17th at 9:30am, location to be determined. The meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm. (Motion moved and seconded- Unanimous).

Respectfully submitted by Denise O'Meara. Date: June 11, 2012.